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MEMOIR

OF

CHARLES FOLSOM.

BY

THEOPHILUS PARSONS, LL. D.

From Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society,
April, 1873.

CAMBRIDGE:
PRESS OF JOHN WILSON AND SON.
1873.

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MEMOIR

OF

CHARLES FOLSOM.

He was born in Exeter, N.H., on the 24th December, 1794. His parents were James Folsom and Sarah Gilman, both of Exeter. He was fitted for college at Phillips Exeter Academy, of which Dr. Benjamin Abbot was then principal; entered Harvard College in the Sophomore class, in 1810; taught a school in Sudbury, Mass., through the winter vacations of the college, in the winters of 1811–12 and 1812–13; and was graduated in 1813. He had at Commencement "A Deliberative Discussion" with W. J. Spooner. It was the fifth part in rank.

After graduation he went, at the instance of President Kirkland, who had been applied to by Dr. Benjamin Vaughan of Hallowell, Maine, to take charge of the academy in that place, and remained there one year. In the autumn of 1814 he came to Cambridge to study divinity as a Resident Graduate, and gave private lessons during two years. He was also a Proctor in the college, and in 1815 was appointed Regent. In the winter of 1815–16 his health was not good, and he gave up the plan of studying for the ministry. In 1816 he made arrangements for the study of medicine, in Cambridge.

In the spring of 1816 President Kirkland proposed to him to go out as chaplain and teacher of mathematics to the midshipmen in the 74 gun-ship "Washington," then about to sail on a cruise in the Mediterranean. The President had been requested by Commodore Chauncey to recommend some young man for the situation, and Mr. Folsom accepted this appointment. In the autumn of 1817, after he had visited many European ports in the Mediterranean, he was appointed *chargé d'affaires* of the Consulate at Tunis, by Mr. William Shaler, Consul-General of the Barbary States. Mr. Thomas D. Anderson had resigned the consulate at Tunis, and Mr. Folsom was

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appointed to hold the office until a successor to Mr. Anderson should be sent out. Soon after his arrival at Tunis the plague appeared there and raged with great violence, and Mr. Folsom remained in charge of the consulate until late in 1819.

After leaving Tunis, he rejoined the squadron, and was appointed by Commodore Bainbridge his private secretary, and accompanied him to Turkey, whither he went on a mission to obtain information which was needed in the preparation of a commercial treaty between that country and our own. In 1820 he was sent to Rome, to take on board Canova's statue of Washington, made for the State of North Carolina. He then returned to the squadron, and came with it to Boston, in 1821.

Soon after his return he was appointed Tutor in Latin in Harvard College, and held that office until 1823. He was then appointed Librarian of the college, and resigned that office in 1826. In 1825 and 1826 he was also Instructor in Italian; and in 1824 engaged with William Cullen Bryant in editing "The United States Literary Gazette."

In the autumn of 1824 he married Miss Susanna Sarah McKean, daughter of Rev. Joseph McKean, Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory in Harvard College.

In the same year he engaged with the firm of Hilliard & Metcalf, proprietors of the University Press, to correct the proofs of classical works published by them; and, after giving up the office of Librarian in 1826, he devoted his time wholly to the examination, correction, and partial editing of the more important works issued from their press; and soon after he became a member of their firm. In 1835 he edited, with Mr. Andrews Norton, the "Select Journal of Foreign Periodical Literature." In the autumn of 1841 he removed to Boston, and opened in Temple Place a school for young ladies, and taught it until the winter of 1845. He was in that year appointed Librarian of the Athenæum, and held this office until 1856. I need not attempt to describe his excellence and usefulness as the Librarian of that great Institution; for the following resolutions, adopted unanimously by the Trustees, do him full justice, and no more than justice: —

1. *Resolved*, That the Trustees of the Boston Athenæum have received with sincere regret the resignation of Mr. Charles Folsom as Librarian, — an office which he has held for more than ten years, performing the various and difficult duties of the place with devoted fidelity, and securing thereby the respect and affection not only of the Trustees, but also of numerous proprietors and visitors of the Athenæum.

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2. *Resolved*, That Mr. Folsom's extensive and varied learning, his refined taste and good judgment, the dignity and urbanity of his manners, his kind regard for the wants of all who use the Library, and the enlightened zeal for literature and the fine arts which he has shown in the discharge of the duties of his office, have not only been highly creditable to him as a gentleman and a scholar, but have redounded to the honor of the Athenæum, and have gained for it the good will and the generous gifts of many patrons of learning; and have entitled him to be remembered not only as a useful officer, but as a benefactor of the institution.

3. *Resolved*, That Mr. Folsom's letter of resignation, and the resolutions relating to it, be entered upon the records of the Trustees; that the Committee be requested to communicate the same to him, with the best wishes of the Trustees for his future success and happiness; and in their behalf to invite him to visit the Athenæum at his pleasure, and to take from the Library, free of expense, the usual number of books allowed to a proprietor.

About the time of his appointment he wrote to his intimate friend, the late Samuel Atkins Eliot, a long letter concerning the preservation, management, and use of a public library. It is full of good sense, gives the results of his own experience and observation, and in delineating the character of a consummate librarian he unintentionally draws a portrait of himself. Of this letter a few copies were printed for private circulation, but it has never been published. I give it a permanent and available place by inserting it in this Memoir, the more willingly because it will, in some degree at least, enable the reader to judge of Mr. Folsom's characteristics as a writer.

TEMPLE PLACE, 27th October, 1845.

MY DEAR SIR, —

Our conversation, the other day, respecting the Athenæum, has revived a train of thought on the general subject of that institution, its nature, and *the right mode of administering it*, which has formerly passed through my mind, when I have speculated upon it merely as a humble member of the literary community of New England, and lately as a citizen of Boston. The view I have been in the habit of taking, I know, is far from being peculiar to me; but it is, I apprehend, not so generally entertained as could be wished, — at least, it has not been acted upon to the extent I have supposed possible, and highly proper. If I had ever had the right which proprietorship may be supposed to give, I should, before now, have expressed my opinion with urgency, from an impulse of public spirit. As it is, you will please to consider what I now say as a sort of *confession of faith*, should the matter ever have more of a personal relation to myself.

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I. The Athenæum contains a great *public library.* This is no longer, if it ever were so, merely a "social library," in the usual sense of the term, for the exclusive benefit of the shareholders. Such, probably, was not the idea of the more enlightened among its founders; such could hardly have been the idea of those who from time to time have made donations of books, or of those larger *benefactors* to whom that name is commonly restricted. They meant the community. I regard the shareholders, and doubtless the majority of them regard themselves, as *donors* to the amount of their subscriptions, — with certain consequent privileges, it is true, — and also as *trustees* for the present public and for posterity. With this liberal view, I suppose many of the recently created shares were taken.

Since the establishment of the Lowell Lectures, and the opening of the Athenæum to any one for ten dollars a year, I have looked upon the two institutions as fitting counterparts to each other. The philosophical curiosity and love of intellectual pursuits awakened by the one — and not much more can be expected from oral popular lectures — should find their appropriate aliment and fruition in the books of the other. The two certainly constitute one of the most precious parts of the name and fame of Boston.

II. The Athenæum contains a repository of the Fine Arts; and, as to this branch, by its exhibitions it professedly seeks the whole public. Should not the other branch of the institution be made to incline as much as possible in the same direction?

III. We have, then, in Boston a great Public Library, — a magazine of mind, —

> "Mente, ...
> Delle cose *custode* e *dispensiera.*"

How shall it be administered? The poet suggests the aptest division of this topic.

1. Its treasures should be *guarded* from age to age with scrupulous care. The beauty of order should pervade their arrangement. The books should be kept in perfect condition as to their binding; and the appropriate binding and lettering of books often involve knowledge and taste enough to bring them within the outer circle of the fine arts. The custodian should have a *respect* for books, and seek, by his example, to inspire others with it. Books in the shops are manufactures, merchandise, — and cost so much. In a fair library, good books are shrines, oracles, — great minds marshalled in glorious companies, uttering the wisdom of past ages, or of an age that will soon be past.

My temperament is not eminently poetical, and I have had much to do with the mechanical manufacture of *volumes;* but I honor the man whose mind readily transmutes a goodly *book* into an *author.* I shall never forget the awe, the emotion, akin to the sublime, with which, when declining day had left me in dim twilight in the old Library at Cambridge, I have passed along by the alcoves, as if in the immediate

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presence of the illustrious dead; and when, on some rare occasion, I have gone alone, late in the evening, to seek a book, with no light but the halo around saints and sages, the feeling was almost overpowering. Had I been one whom we wot of, you would long since have heard another solemn and tender "Voice of the Night."

All this means only, that a library is a *sanctum;* and whatever relates to the *keeping* of the books, and the preservation of due quiet, should be *the subject of precise rules*, which, in *the most courteous spirit*, should be enforced when necessary; and any odium arising therefrom in the minds of unreasonable people should be assumed by the Trustees, to whom the Librarian is immediately responsible. But odium will be slow to arise, if I am right as to the moral effect to be expected from what I shall next speak of, which, I am alarmed to say, is the main point of this unconscionable epistle. But I will be brief, and, omitting all mention of exact catalogues and similar appliances of the first necessity, I come to —

2. The duties of a Librarian as the *dispenser* of a great Library. The office of *custodian* has, so far as I know, always been satisfactorily performed at the Athenæum. Not so, I believe, the other branch of a Librarian's duty. By *dispensing*, I am far from meaning only the finding of the particular volumes asked for, or the recording of the titles of such as are borrowed. I mean quite another ability in the Librarian, — an ability to "bring forth, out of the treasure" committed to him, "things new and old." He should be passably skilled in ancient and modern languages; should be acquainted with the history of literature; should know the external history of books, and have some notion of their contents, understanding at least their scope and bearing, so as to be able readily to follow out subjects, and to put inquirers upon the right track. To many, the very multitude of books is confusing, and days of research are lost in a wrong direction, which a few words from an intelligent Librarian might at once prevent. If I may allude to my own experience, he will account it a great privilege to abridge the labor of superior minds, whose time is precious to the public, by his *local* knowledge, as I may call it; and he will delight to point younger persons to the best books on any subject in a course of reading; thus aiding the two classes, — consulters and regular readers. With the latter this city abounds, or should be made to abound: this is a *domestic* affair, the training of our own young people, to say nothing of solacing the old. The former class is still larger, and wide-spread as the country, including authors and professional men, who are writing books for fame, or pursuing inquiries for some practical end.

Now, I would say, let the Athenæum take the ground, that the former class are to be *allured* to consult its Library; let it be generally understood and proclaimed, not only that its stores are accessible for this purpose, but that a competent person stands ready, as the *organ of the liberal spirit of the Bostonians*, to aid in making them available for the promotion of knowledge throughout the land (under the proper

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regulations, of course). Let every scholar, not residing fairly *within the liberties of Boston* (for to such as do must generally attach the payment of scot and lot), feel that, without money and without price, he is welcome, nay, more, that he is thankworthy, if, in the prescribed way, he takes any thing from you which he thinks he can turn to the good of the public. For all the seed-corn you lend, your granary, like the widow's barrel of meal, "shall not waste," but rather shall be increased by a portion of the harvest springing from your bounty. Let the far-off student in the Valley of the Mississippi, who is vainly hammering at some literary task for want of books, and ignorant perhaps as to the existence of the best books on his subject, understand that, when he comes North in the summer, if he will present himself at the Boston Athenæum or Harvard University, he may chance to clear off a year's docket of doubts in a single day. The *A*thenæum or *H*arvard, I say, — *A*ganippe or *H*ippocrene, — for both were fountains on Mount Helicon, and both consecrated to the Muses.* Every Preface which acknowledges their assistance adds a feather to their plumes, or, better, sets a signet to their value.

The people of other communities say that Boston, in her vanity, has assumed the title of "the Athens of America." If it is worth having, let us make them ratify it, and shout, with a heartfelt application, "*Ἴωμεν ἐς Ἀθῆνας!*" "Let us go to Boston," "our minds to ripen in her northern sky." But in Athens, of all places, hospitality was not left entirely to the kindness of individuals: it was recognized as a matter of public concernment. If the altered condition of modern society dispenses us from the necessity of caring for the supper and lodging of the strangers who voluntarily visit our city, or are accidentally detained here, we still have a duty to perform by doing all that we can to make their sojourn agreeable and profitable to them. Nor is this duty abridged by the new position of Boston, from which she all but shakes hands with the Old World, and now interlocks arms with Canada and the Provinces. I here speak of strangers merely as such. Men of mark make their own way. But there are other "guests of the city" than those who come to the notice of the Mayor; quiet, unpretending, intelligent persons, who cannot claim, or do not care to seek, private attentions. If you have ever been so circumstanced as to be *obliged to wait* in a foreign city, without letters and without acquaintance, you may have had occasion, as I have, to bless the courtesy of libraries exhibited in the cosmopolitan spirit I recommend, by scholars willing to consider the mere pursuit of knowledge as a bond of brotherhood, and a title to kindness. And here is the place to say, that the Librarian of the Athenæum should be competent, in some sort, to hold intercourse with those who do not speak English, and to conduct, when necessary, a foreign correspondence.

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* *Cotton Mather* would not have forborne to run the parallel a step further, — as, that they were just about *three miles* apart, Hippocrene being somewhat the more elevated; and he would have deemed it a pleasant remark, that, after mingling and diffusing their waters in the Copaic Lake, they together nourished the *largest* eels in all Greece! — facts duly vouched.

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In confirmation of some of the preceding remarks, I may be permitted to add that, more than twenty years ago, I had some agency in urging successfully upon the corporation of Harvard College the laws (which I was to execute), throwing open the Library to all comers, with the implied assurance of welcome and aid. Among the good consequences of this change of system, may be fairly reckoned, in a great degree at least, the increased research on the part of many of our authors of all sects, with an increasing sense of its importance, and hence more thoroughness in their works; — a desire to enlarge the apparatus which had proved so useful to them, and grateful acknowledgments borne out by donations of books; — in fine, whatever dissatisfaction may at any moment have been expressed in relation to other parts of the University, unmingled blessings upon *the Library.*

IV. The Athenæum is to be notably increased within no long period. How, or from what source, I know not.* But it is hardly to be believed, that the end of opening new and larger halls will be only a display of empty shelves. Such a result would be unprecedented in this community. Boston is pledged to the contrary.

Now, the judicious increase of a public library is a grave study. Completeness is to be aimed at in some departments more than in others, at least sooner than in others. What *are* the departments of learning? What is *completeness* in regard to them? The Librarian should, at all events, be able to *understand* the answer to these questions; and he should, moreover, have a notion of the contents of the other learned libraries in the neighborhood, that all may, to a certain extent, conspire to produce in the aggregate a completeness which no one of them can hope very soon to attain for itself. Each may well be distinguished by some peculiar features, as the Athenæum now is by works on the arts. Again, it is far from being true that the latest edition of a book is the best.† But all may be summed up in this, that Bibliography is no mean science.

V. If the Librarian has also in his province the works of art, then he should not be ignorant of the history of art, its ancient monuments, and modern masterpieces. The wider has been his observation of other collections, and the more cultivated his taste, the better. If he need not have the artist's faculty, yet neither is the guardian of ideal beauty, like the Sultan's Nubian, qualified for his trust by constitutional indifference towards the subjects of it.

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* N.B. — The Bromfield Fund was not then dreamed of.

† A pregnant instance of this just occurs to me. The latest edition of Lord Bacon's Works (an American one), "complete" on the titlepage, omits his "De Augmentis Scientiarum," his maturest and, perhaps, largest production (the growth of twenty years, and of which the author fondly says, "I think it will live and be *a citizen of the world*)," under the preposterous idea, founded only on the similarity of the titles, that it is merely a Latin translation of his earlier, brief "Advancement of Learning," in *two* books; while, in fact, it consists of *nine* books, being "enlarged," as Bacon expresses it, "almost to a *new work.*" Yet the preface of the publishers ventures to hope that their edition "will find its way into every *well-selected* library in our country;" and probably before this time it has become *the* Bacon of most College Libraries in the United States, — a "complete" Virgil without the Georgics!

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With works of art may be classed coins and medals, though a far higher interest belongs to them, considered as the subjects of the Science of Numismatics, a study at once elegant and useful. Of *ancient* manuscripts, rare even in Europe, we shall probably continue to see next to none on these western shores. They are wisely kept at home. But the most ancient as well as most authentic original records of the Grecian and Roman world are within our easy reach. Still there is not, I believe, in the United States, a reasonably complete series of these irrefragable documents of ancient history; her unambiguous foot-prints, — like those of the great birds in stone, — from which are made unerring inferences, and by which is settled what is doubtful or discordant in written documents, necessarily vitiated, more or less, in the process of copying.

Having many years ago studied this subject abroad with the aid of foreign collections, and having, indeed, formed a decent one of my own in barbarous regions, once seats of civilization, in part from the hands of the actual finders (myself a finder, too), on my return I had the pleasure of making a descriptive list of the coins of the Salem East India Marine Society (afterwards printed, I think, in their catalogue). I was thus led to inquire what there was among us of the sort, and to become acquainted with most of the scanty collections in this vicinity. The Athenæum has made a fair beginning; and there is no reason why it should not go on, and soon have the finest Cabinet of Coins in the country, — *conveniently arranged for study, — for use.* The series in silver and copper might, at no great expense, be rendered nearly complete, without the coins of extraordinary rareness and consequent costliness. The value of such is often factitious (virtuosos being prone to the foible of tulip and shell fanciers), as they have not necessarily greater intrinsic interest as to usefulness or beauty. Besides, the genuineness of well-preserved, not uncommon, coins is less liable to suspicion, and is easily determined by a practised eye; for their well-known abundance and cheapness make it no object for the most skilful counterfeiters to imitate them. Thus the Librarian, as Cabinet-keeper, though he need not be an Eckhel or a Sestini, should add to his other knowledge a tincture, at least, of *virtù.*

VI. If such, then, as I have described, is the appropriate office of a great Library in a city, which, like ours, is a centre of wide and elevating influence throughout a vast country, — and if such are the qualifications requisite in a person fit to administer it, — *he should receive a salary proportioned to the pay of other learned professions, and suitable for a scholar and a gentleman.* He should have an *honorable position,* should feel that, in the able discharge of his duties, something more than his bread is at stake, and should identify his *reputation* with the best interests of the institution. There is absurdity in saying, "Get your work done *cheap,* and buy the more books." The well-performed work of a Librarian worth having *brings* "more books:" he refunds his salary in part in this way.

If a great Library were about to be founded here *de novo* with one

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hundred thousand dollars, what intelligent person would hesitate to say, "An investment for the adequate pay of a suitable Librarian should take precedence of, or at least be simultaneous with, the first considerable investment in books?"

The Librarian should be in the counsels of the Trustees, except where it would affect his responsibility to them; should be encouraged to suggest as well as execute; should have aid enough to prevent a sacrifice of his higher functions to his lower; should have sympathy from the Trustees as well as oversight; and should be reckoned with at short intervals, for frequent quittances beget alacrity in carrying forward any work of responsibility.

VII. Having undertaken to utter my whole mind on this subject, as one of general interest, I will not be withheld, by any fear of being misapprehended, from expressing my settled conviction that *now* is the time *to act* upon it. The Athenæum, before long, is to be transferred to a new edifice, and begin a new era. Whoever is to take proper charge of it there should have full opportunity to become thoroughly acquainted with it, in its details, as it is, — with what it has, and what it wants. He should prepare himself to superintend wisely its removal, and to afford, if it may be, valuable suggestions as to the interior arrangements of the new building, — a matter of the greatest prospective importance. It is natural to suppose that the Committee, on whom will rest the responsibility of preparing the new and permanent abode of the Athenæum, will be business-men, — gentlemen of more public spirit than leisure; and that they may be glad to have their gratuitous labors seconded, sometimes perhaps not a little relieved, by the aid of a competent person giving his whole time and thoughts to the business, and carrying out the details of what they decide upon.

Nor, as to worthy persons now employed in the Athenæum, would early action imply any harsh and violent breaking up of existing arrangements. It should be regarded as an easy and natural transition resulting from a change of circumstances. The institution is judged to have outgrown its vestments; new and better-fitting are provided, of course. To lay aside an *outgrown* garment casts no reflection on its past usefulness, nor upon its present value for other purposes.

I sat down, my dear Sir, to write you a letter, and it has swelled almost to a dissertation, — of an oddly variegated web, I confess. But I am sure of your indulgence for whatever there may be in it little to the purpose, if I have succeeded in giving shape to any views that may be turned to practical account for the real advancement of "The Boston Athenæum."

Truly your friend and servant,

CHARLES FOLSOM.

To SAMUEL A. ELIOT, Esq.

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In March, 1869, he had an attack of paralysis, from which he so far recovered as to be able to walk freely in the open air, with some assistance, enjoy the society of his friends, and occupy himself with books. In the latter part of January, 1872, he had a second attack of the same disease, under which his strength gradually yielded.

He died on the evening of the 8th of November, 1872.

Mr. Folsom lived the uneventful life of a scholar, marked by no uncommon circumstance, if we except the episode of his consular service on the southern coast of the Mediterranean. There was, however, connected with this service one peculiar and interesting incident. One of the youngest of the midshipmen who were Mr. Folsom's pupils was Farragut. He was deeply interested in his studies and in his teacher, and a universal favorite; and when Mr. Folsom left the ship, young Farragut begged so hard to go with him, and continue his studies under his care, that leave was granted, and they remained together until they returned on shipboard. In after years Farragut was never weary of acknowledging, in private and in public, how much he owed to the care, instruction, and influence of the "young Yankee Pastor," as he called his friend and tutor. At the close of the late war, when Farragut came to Boston, loaded with honors, as soon as he had obeyed the calls of etiquette and ceremony, his first visit was to his old friend. Cordially was he welcomed, cordially did he reciprocate the deep and tender regard he met with. Ever after while he lived, the visits of Mr. Folsom were among those which he most sought and most enjoyed. I will add, for the mention of the circumstance is due equally to the Admiral and to Mr. Folsom, that during this visit to Boston the Admiral gave him a magnificent silver vase. This vase has on the front this inscription: —

To
C. Folsom
from his old friend and pupil,
D. G. Farragut, Vice-Admiral,
Sept. 12, 1865.

On one side is engraved the United States ship "Erie," giving the salute to C. Folsom (the representative of the consulate of the United States), who is about landing at Tunis, and is in the boat with Midshipman Farragut, with the words, —

Off Tunis.

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On the other side another ship engraved, with the words, —

United States Ship Hartford,
Capt. P. Drayton,
Bearing the flag of
Vice-Admiral Farragut,
1864.

These engravings were made from sketches drawn by the Admiral himself for the vase.

Whether we consider Mr. Folsom intellectually or morally, he was a peculiar, and, though I would avoid overstatement, I am justified in saying, a remarkable man.

Endowed with far more than usual ability, he early acquired habits of industry which never failed him. His knowledge of classical literature was extensive and accurate. He was well acquainted with the principal languages of Southern Europe, especially the Italian; and had studied many branches of science. He had a strong tendency to, I may say a passion for, exact and minute accuracy. Here lay his strength and his weakness. I call it so, for it certainly obstructed his practical usefulness. When he undertook to correct the productions of the University Press, then the principal publishing house of valuable works in the United States, it was thought that his knowledge, skill, and care made this precisely the place in which he could be most useful and successful. It was not so. He aimed at impracticable perfection. No book passed through his hands without labor upon its pages sometimes exceeding that of its author; and it would go forth at last, with an excellence due largely to the corrector of the press. But it was another result of his excessive care that the press was arrested, and compositors and printers waited, while he was spending days or weeks in verifying words or statements, or guarding against the possibility of error, in respect to questions too minute to require or to repay such labor.

When at a later period he was employed to assist in the publication of Worcester's great Dictionary, the same determination to exhaust on all points every possible means of information made it practically impossible to profit by his labors. When it was shown to him that at the rate at which he advanced the book could not be published in that generation, this made no difference with him. He could not do otherwise. There seemed to be a want of perspective in his mind, which prevented his giving to questions the relative place or magnitude which belonged to them. For he appeared to think that

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the nearest possible approach to perfection was due to every thing which passed through his hands.

He was, however, fortunate enough to find an occupation which utilized this peculiarity of character without permitting it to do mischief. Some of our best and most eminent authors submitted their works to his critical examination. They could place in his hands their manuscripts or proofs, certain that no error in style and no doubtful expression could escape his notice. And, while profiting by his minute and exact accuracy, they exercised their own judgment upon any correction or alteration which he suggested. I may mention Quincy, Norton, Sparks, Palfrey, and Prescott, among those who cordially acknowledged the assistance which in this way he rendered to them. I may add, as to books not strictly professional, my own humbler name; and the list might be largely extended.

He was constantly called upon to prepare or assist in the preparation of inscriptions; for he had as true a gift for this kind of composition as a poet has for writing "in numbers." This gift he was invited to exercise on small and great occasions; from a motto or inscription on a carving or vase intended as a gift of honor or of friendship, to a mural tablet or a monument to the dead. His productions of this kind were simple, graceful, full of meaning, and faultless in construction. In 1846 he was called upon to prepare inscriptions for monuments to be erected to three of the Presidents of Harvard College, whose remains lie in the old Cambridge burying-ground, — Dunster, Willard, and Webber. He furnished the following: —

HENRICUS . DUNSTER
PRIMUS . COLLEGII . HARVARDINI . PRÆSES
VIR . PIETATE . DOCTRINA . PRUDENTIA . INSIGNIS
OBIIT . SCITUATÆ . AN . M.DC.LIX.
HUC . TRANSLATUM . EST . CORPUS
UT . QUOD . ILLE . IN . VOTIS . HABUERAT
PROPE . ACADEMIAM . A . SE . TUM . NUTRITAM . IN . CUNABULIS
EX . RE . FAMILIARI
TUM . RITIBUS . DISCIPLINIS . LEGIBUS . INSTRUCTAM
REQUIESCERET
MONUMENTUM . HOC . INIURIA . TEMPORIS . DIRUPTUM
SOCII . ÆTERNUM . ACADEMIÆ . DECUS . CURANTES
REFICIENDUM . JUSSERUNT . AN . M.DCCC.XLV.

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JOSEPHO . WILLARD . S . T . D . LL.D.
Collegii . Harvardini . Præsidi . XIII.
Biddefordiæ . In . Provincia . Manensi . Nato
Abavi . Simonis . De . Republica
Proavi . Samuelis . De . Collegio
Bene . Merentium . Æmulo
Novæ . Bedfordiæ . Mortuo . An . M . DCC . IV . Ætatis . Suæ . LXVI
Viro . Integerrimo . Strenuo . Docto . Pio
Theologiæ . Astronomiæ . Et . Græcarum . Literarum . Apprime . Perito
Ecclesiæ . In . Beverleio . Pastori . Fidelissimo
Qui . Quum . Tutor . Primum . Ac . Socius . In . Academia . Fuisset
Postremum . Eandem . Dum . Incommodis . Belli . Recentibus
Elanquescerat
Suscipiens . Erexit . Sanis . Instruxit . Disciplinis
Et . Tanta . Cum . Gravitate . Candore . Benignitate
Per . XXIII . Circiter . Annos . Administravit
Ut . Egregiam . Apud . Omnes . Sibi . Comparavit . Opinionem
Senatus . Academicus
H . M . Ponendum . Curavit.

Hic . Situs . Est
SAMUEL . WEBBER . S . T . D .
Præses . Collegii . Harvardini . XIV .
Byfieldiæ . In . Agro . Essexiensi . Natus
Vir . Probus . Gravis . Mitis . Sedulus
Doctrina . Ac . Pietate . Insignis.
Qui
Quum . Tutor . Primum . In . Academia . Fuisset
Inde . Per . Annos . Circiter . XVII .
Mathematicas . Disciplinas . Summa . Cum . Laude . Professus . Esset
Atque . Tandem . Ad . Gubernacula . Sederet
Subita . Eheu . Morte . Correptus
Decessit . Meritis . Quam . Annis . Cumulatior
An . M . DCCC . X . Ætatis . Suæ . LI .
Hoc . Monumentum
Senatus . Academicus . P . C .
An . M . DCCC . XLVI .

I have selected for examples these inscriptions from the many which he made, in part that I may indulge myself with

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quoting from a letter about them, written to him by his friend, Mr. S. A. Eliot, to whom I have already referred, and who was then Treasurer of the college.

"I have read over your inscriptions with great admiration of the skill and discrimination you have shown, and the felicity with which you have said pleasant things without flattery. Dunster's is a beautiful and satisfactory composition. Willard's, however, is the masterpiece of the three. There is a glow and freedom about it, a spirit of patriotism and a spirit of reverence, which are quite delightful."

A few years ago a workman on a road near the harbor of Castine, in Maine, found a piece of sheet copper, about eight inches by ten. Observing some marks and numbers upon it, he gave it to an intelligent gentleman in Castine, Mr. George H. Witherbe, who sent an exact copy to our Mr. Charles Deane, who referred it to Mr. Folsom. Almost every word in the inscription is abridged, and many were indicated only by an initial letter. But Mr. Folsom's thorough knowledge of the language of inscriptions enabled him to restore and complete the whole in a manner which commended itself to our best scholars as unquestionably accurate. The plate thus read imports that, "in the year 1648, on the 8th of June, Friar Leo of Paris, in the mission of the Capuchins, laid this foundation in honor of the Virgin Mary, under the title of Our Lady of Holy Hope." The foundation was undoubtedly the corner-stone of some structure, and probably of a church or chapel.

The Capuchins were a branch of the Franciscans. No English or American writer of New England history has noticed the existence of a mission of Capuchins on the territory of Maine. There are, however, references and allusions in the Jesuit "Recitals," and in some histories of Catholic efforts at Christianizing the Indians, which may be understood as relating to this Mission.

I may here mention one of Mr. Folsom's literary discoveries, for so it may be called. Our national motto, *E Pluribus Unum*, has been much discussed. Many guesses have been made as to its inventor or author; and much excellent criticism expended in proving that it was bad Latin; or rather that it had a meaning wholly inappropriate to its use as the motto of this country, inasmuch as when translated, according to the rules of the Latin language, it meant "one selected out of many," and not "one composed out of many." Mr. Folsom in his literary wanderings came upon the phrase. He found that Virgil was the author of this bad Latin. It occurs in a pleasant little poem regarded as his by the best critics, and printed in the best editions of his works. It is called "Mo-

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retum," which word means simply a "salad." In it Virgil describes in most harmonious verse a Roman farmer coming home from his labors, and directing his servant, a negro woman, — who is portrayed with exceeding vividness and truth, —to prepare his dinner. The servant goes to work, and Virgil gives us an admirable recipe for a salad. He enumerates all the ingredients she used, and tells us the order and the manner in which they were used. When all are in the dish,

> "It manus in gyrum; paullatim singula vires
> Deperdunt proprias; color est E PLURIBUS UNUS." *

I may also mention here another of his gifts to literature. He found in a very rare work, of which he had picked up a copy, that the famous mediæval hymn, "Dies iræ, Dies illa," had been sadly shorn of its original proportions. It is known by the name which I give to it above, because it is always printed as beginning with the stanza of which these four words form the first line. In 1865 Mr. Folsom stated, at a meeting of this Society, that "this grim and terrific offspring of the piety of the Middle Ages had been shorn, in later times, of its first four stanzas, as appears from one of the earliest copies of it, inscribed on a marble tablet in the Church of St. Francis, at Mantua. This inscription was printed in that rare and curious book, 'Variorum in Europa Itinerum Deliciæ,' by Nathan Chytræus, 1594."

As these four lost stanzas appear to me as well worthy of preservation as those which form the hymn as it is commonly written, and as they have not, so far as I know, been printed since Chytræus put them in his book, which is now almost inaccessible, I give them below: —

> "Quæso anima fidelis,
> Ah, quid respondere velis,
> Christo venturo de cœlis,
>
> Cum a te poscet rationem,
> Ob boni omissionem,
> Et mali commissionem?
>
> Dies illa, Dies iræ,
> Quam conemur prevenire,
> Obviamque Deo ire
>
> Seria contritione,
> Gratiæ apprehensione,
> Vitæ emendatione."

* Since this memoir was reported to the Historical Society, the writer has found that Mr. Folsom's claims to the first discovery of this origin of our national motto are open to question. He mentioned it at a meeting of the Society in Sept. 1862. But the 3d vol. of the Historical Magazine, of New York, in August, 1859, contains a communication from Baltimore, signed B. M., quoting the line from Virgil, and referring the motto to it.

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Mr. Folsom was chosen a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1827, and he was also a member of the American Antiquarian Society. He was a constant attendant at the meetings of both these societies, and often added to their interest and value from his stores of varied information. At the annual meeting of the latter, in 1859, at their Hall in Worcester, he read a very interesting Report of the council, which he had prepared as a member of that body. In this Report he displayed signal ability, alike in treating of the history, character, and purpose of the society, of the best way of enlarging the usefulness of its library, and of the peculiar duties of the librarian, — a subject in which he was thoroughly versed, — and in the discriminating sketches which he gave of members who had deceased within the year. These were Dr. Henry Bond of Philadelphia, Dr. Samuel Willard of Deerfield, and Alexander Humboldt.

In this last mentioned memoir, for it deserves that name, while touching upon the many remarkable points in the life and character of Humboldt, he dwells at some length upon his early travels in South America, his constant interest in this continent, and particularly his careful and thorough investigation into the character and the discoveries of Amerigo Vespucci; and the probability — not yet a certainty — that Vespucci did reach this continent before Columbus, while it is certain that they both died in the firm belief that they had arrived at the coast of Asia.

During many of his later years he had a project which partly his fastidiousness and partly his other engagements prevented his carrying into effect. He proposed to make a book, to be called "The Companion to the English Dictionary." The name tells its intended character. His purpose was to consider in it doubtful phrases, the construction of sentences, and the proper way of using words and forms of language of which only one way could be the best. Such a work as he could have written, had he been content with attainable excellence, would have been an invaluable assistant to every writer of English.

Let me now speak of him in reference to his moral characteristics. Here, as before, if I find a weakness, it is a virtue carried to excess. He was, if such a thing be possible, too disinterested. Always ready to leave any occupation of his own or interrupt any leisure, if a friend or a stranger offered him an opportunity of being useful, he seemed to think and to care for every one but himself. I knew him well for half a century. I believe it may be truly said that no one ever had

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a sweeter temper or a more gentle and generous disposition; for this was scarcely possible. Always putting the best construction upon every thing, and throwing the light of his own kindness over every person, he was almost unable to take offence, and wholly incapable of retaining resentment.

He was a member of the Social Club to which reference is made in the Memoirs of Jared Sparks, William H. Prescott, and Charles G. Loring. Formed in 1818, with accessions within one or two years thereafter, it numbered twenty-five; and it still continues, with but four of its members living. During this long period, he was, while his health permitted, a constant attendant. Among so many young men, growing from youth to age, with an intimacy which cast off all reserve, occasional collisions were inevitable. But from Folsom no one ever heard a word or saw a look or sign of offence or unkind feeling, however momentary.

His life had its share of vicissitudes and disappointments. But through them all he was always the same. In all his relations, as husband, father, friend, his kindness was warm, constant, and unselfish. No one ever knew him refuse a favor which it was in his power to grant; or think first of himself, when the question was whether he should benefit himself or another.

In the fulness of years he has passed away. But he will live in the memory of those who knew him, not only as a cultivated and accomplished scholar, but as a thoroughly good man.

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